Garitas in the Caribbean

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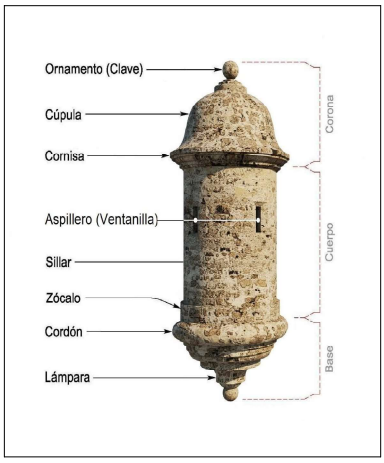
The first Spanish fortifications in the Caribbean, including sentry boxes (garitas), were built in the early 16th century as part of Spain's efforts to secure its newly claimed territories from European rivals and pirates. Some key developments include:

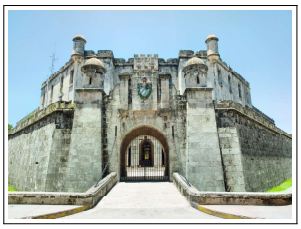
Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic early 1500s: The first major fortification in the Caribbean was the Fortaleza Ozama, completed in 1505. It had a tower for surveillance but no traditional sentry boxes at first.
San Juan, Puerto Rico 16th century: Castillo San Felipe del Morro and Castillo San Cristobal introduced more developed coastal defenses, with garitas appearing in the late 1500s and early 1600s.
Havana, Cuba late 1500s: Castillo de la Real Fuerza was oneof the earliest stone forts in the region, followed by Castillo del Morro, both featuring elements of Spanish military architecture that would become standard across the Caribbean.



Garita components

Santo Domingo, DR
Fortaleza Ozama
Start1500's

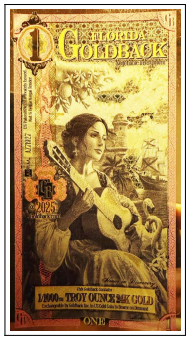
San Jua, PR
C. San Felipe del Morro
Start 1539



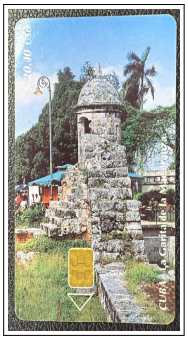
Havana, Cuba
C. de la Real Fuerza
Start 1558

Porto Bello, Panama
C. de San Jeronimo
Start 1586

Santiago de Cuba
C. San Pedro de la Roca
Start 1638



St Agustine, USA
C de San Marcos
Start 1642



Havana, Cuba
Garita de la Maestranza
Star1647

Cartagena, Colombia
C. San Sebatian/
Start 1741

These fortifications evolved over the centuries, adapting to new threats and advances in military engineering. Many of the distinctive garitas seen today, especially in Puerto Rico and Cuba, were added during expansions in the 17th and 18th centuries.